

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 LONDON 03521 261105 Z

15

ACTION EUR-10

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ADP-00 AF-04 NEA-06 NSC-10 NSCE-00

CIAE-00 INR-09 NSAE-00 RSC-01 PM-03 DODE-00 RSR-01

EB-03 L-02 /064 W

----- 019989

R 261052 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9986

INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

S E C R E T LONDON 03521

LIMDIS

DEPT PASS CAIRO

E. O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, LY, UK

SUBJECT: BRITISH RELATIONSHIP WITH LIBYA AND ARMS SALES

1. IN COURSE OF CONVERSATION ON OTHER TOPICS MARCH 23, FCO HEAD OF NEAR EASTERN AND NORTH AFRICAN DEPT CRAIG GOT STARTED ON HMG RELATIONS WITH LIBYA. HE WENT MORE FULLY INTO THE QUESTION THAN HE HAD AT US- UK TALKS ON AFRICA PREVIOUS WEEK.

2. CRAIG SAID SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT OF HMG RELATIONS WITH LIBYA WOULD INVOLVE SETTLEMENT OF FINANCIAL DISPUTES PROBABLY THROUGH BRITISH PAYMENT OF 25 TO 30 MILLION POUNDS STERLING. YET WHAT IS THE INDUCEMENT TO SETTLE? MINISTERS ARE HARDLY LIKELY TO TAKE SUCH DECISION, AND TRY TO DEFEND IT TO PARLIAMENT, IN PRESENT CLIMATE, WHEN LIBYANS ARE ASSISTING TERRORISTS, TAKING POTSHOTS AT AMERICAN PLANES, MAKING IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR HMG DIPLOMATIC COURIERS TO ENTER LIBYA, ETC.

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SECRET

PAGE 02 LONDON 03521 261105 Z

3. EVEN IF CLIMATE IMPROVED, CRAIG CONTINUED, ARGUMENT THAT PAYING OFF LIBYANS WILL LEAD TO GREAT COMMERCIAL GAINS IS NOT LIKELY TO BE EFFECTIVE WITH PARLIAMENT SINCE ONLY PROSPECT FOR IMPORTANT GAINS WOULD BE IN ARMS TRADE. LIBYA IS ALREADY BRITAIN' S LARGEST CUSTOMER IN ME ON NORMAL COMMERCIAL ITEMS, AMOUNTING TO SOME 35 MILLION POUNDS LAST YEAR.

4. EVEN IF ARMS SALES WERE POLITICALLY FEASIBLE, CRAIG SAID, CHANCES ARE ANY BRITISH PROPOSAL WOULD BE MET BY LIBYANS ASKING FOR CHIEFTAIN TANKS AND JAGUAR AIRCRAFT, NEITHER OF WHICH AVAILABLE. LIBYANS MAY THEN REFUSE TO TAKE ANYTHING ELSE.

5. COMMENT: CRAIG MAY BE OVERSIPLYING, BUT THRUST OF FCO POSITION ( AND PROBLEM) IS EVIDENT.

ANNENBERG

NOTE BY OC/ T: NOT PASSED CAIRO.

SECRET

\*\*\* Current Handling Restrictions \*\*\* LIMDIS

\*\*\* Current Classification \*\*\* SECRET

## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
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**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
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